

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NEW DIRECTIONS TASK FORCE (NDTF)

ADOPTED BY NDTF ON JUNE 10, 2001

1. Create a committee of the NDTF, known as the Special Needs Housing Alliance, to provide an ongoing forum for County departments, service providers, housing agencies, developers, and other stakeholders to meet, learn, and plan together, and serve as a conduit and catalyst to bring housing and program interests together in Los Angeles County for proactively securing funding for special needs housing. Creation of the Alliance will occur in two phases as follows:

Phase I

- Develop and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among NDTF member agencies
 - Determine roles and responsibilities of NDTF member agencies
 - Align needed staff support resources for establishing the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance

Phase II

- Identify and include community stakeholders as members of the Alliance, determine their roles and responsibilities, and secure letters of commitment in support of the MOU
2. To charge the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance with the following vision and mission:

VISION

To ensure that special needs populations have adequate housing, all support services needs have been met, services are fully integrated into the community and supported by a joint collaboration of CBOs, non-profit entities and local government.

MISSION

To identify housing requirements for special needs populations, proactively pursue legislation and funding to address the identified needs, develop and implement strategies to increase the availability of geographically disbursed, service-enriched housing, through an integrated community approach in partnership with local government, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and non-profit entities.

3. To designate representatives with housing knowledge and decision-making authority to serve as members of the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance from the Community Development Commission, Departments of Children and Family Services, Probation, Community and Senior Services, Mental Health, Public Social Services, Health Services and the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Community stakeholders will be identified and added to the membership as part of Phase II.

4. To designate a representative from the Community Development Commission to serve as the chairperson of the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance. A community representative will be selected as co-chair during Phase II.
5. To direct the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance to develop an annual strategic plan for enhancing the availability of special needs housing, implement action steps, and provide quarterly status reports on progress to the NDTF.

JUSTIFICATION

In order for Los Angeles County to be competitive, timely in submitting funding applications, and successful in securing funding, housing, and support services, ongoing coordination and collaboration is critical among stakeholders. Since applications frequently require site control, there must be months, or even years, of advance work to ensure the availability of property that can be developed and included in a grant application. Currently, there are no plans for securing properties and planning for future housing grant cycles.

Planning and delivering the required services and housing requires commitment, experience, and knowledge on the part of all stakeholders from start to completion, which includes identifying funding opportunities, confirming need, securing needed resources, developing applications and plans, constructing housing, implementing programs, and placing occupants. Currently, there is not an agreed upon and established set of priorities for the development of special needs housing and related supportive services in Los Angeles County.

Creating the Special Needs Housing Alliance will regularly bring together needed experts, stakeholders, and resources for developing a strategic plan for enhancing the availability of special needs housing in Los Angeles County. Ongoing coordination, collaboration, and communication are needed to optimize current and future housing and program resources. Establishing the Special Needs Housing Alliance will provide the community, community-based organizations, and developers with an accessible and accountable body responsible for developing and implementing plans for special needs housing.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACT

Special needs housing refers to transitional and/or permanent housing that is developed/made available for specific populations who have a high need for assistance due to their economic status and other underlying conditions such as age, mental or physical disability, a debilitating illness, or other life challenges.

The groups of persons that can be considered “special needs” may vary from one community to another due to a multitude of factors such as differences in geography, average age of the population, and/or income levels. A determination of which group(s) will receive services, in any given jurisdiction, is usually based on a local assessment of need and available funding.

The following groups have been identified as a starting point for determining the target populations for special needs housing services: domestic violence victims; emancipated youth from the dependency and probation systems; youth at risk of being chronically homeless; persons with mental illness; persons living with HIV/AIDS; persons with disabilities; frail elderly; and teen mothers.

Desired results for impacting this population includes establishing service enriched supported community housing that provides individuals with respect, dignity, and appropriate services to meet their individual needs and sustain independent living. Partnering with communities to develop support and incentives for embracing special needs housing will also be pursued. County, city, community agencies, and private entities will make a commitment to work together and focus their collective efforts towards measurable goals and outcomes for streamlining processes and projects for enhancing special needs housing and services.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION STEPS

Upon approval of the recommendations by the NDTF, the following action steps will be undertaken by the Special Needs Housing Alliance.

- Develop and execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance member agencies
- Determine roles and responsibilities of agencies
- Align needed staff support resources for establishing the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance
- Identify and include community stakeholders as members of the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance, determine their roles and responsibilities, and develop letters of support for the MOU
- Assimilate an inventory of special needs housing support services/programs and funding stream opportunities
- Assess special housing needs and architectural/design sensitivities for target populations
- Identify geographic areas needing special housing
- Develop public/private partnerships to proactively and collaboratively identify a range of special needs housing projects
- Conduct assessment of process enhancements for securing special needs housing
- Identify legislative priorities for advocating Los Angeles County's special housing needs
- Determine communication process for enhancing the planning and pursuit of special needs housing
- Present a strategic plan, policy recommendations, and process improvements to the NDTF within six months

CONCLUSION

Creation of the NDTF Special Needs Housing Alliance supports the direction from the Board of Supervisors to develop a seamless social service delivery system. Providing youth, domestic violence victims, elderly, and mentally and/or physically disabled residents of Los Angeles County with special needs housing is paramount to building their capacity to be self-sustaining. Collaboration and commitment among public and private sector agencies that includes community involvement must be established to improve the availability of special needs housing and support services.